WE CLAIM:

1. A nonwoven fabric comprising a support web and a fibrous barrier web, having a hydrohead of at least about 145 cm and a Frazier permeability of at least about 0.3 m^3/m^2-min.

2. A nonwoven fabric comprising at least one support web and a hydrophobic barrier web with fibers having diameters of less than 2.0 micrometers, a hydrohead of at least about 145 cm and a Frazier permeability of at least about 0.3 m^3/m^2-min.

3. The nonwoven fabric of claims 1 or 2, wherein said barrier web fibers have diameters of less than 1.0 micrometer.

4. The nonwoven fabric of claims 1 or 2, wherein said barrier web fibers have diameters of less than 0.5 micrometer.

5. The nonwoven fabric of claim 3, wherein the barrier layer basis weight is no more than 15 g/m^2.

6. The nonwoven fabric of claim 4, wherein the barrier layer has a basis weight of no more than 3 g/m^2.

7. The nonwoven fabric of claims 1 or 2, wherein said barrier web comprises nanofibers of hydrophobic polymer or copolymer.

8. The nonwoven fabric of claim 7, wherein said hydrophobic polymer or copolymer is a polyolefin, a partially fluorinated polymer or a perfluorinated polymer.

9. The nonwoven fabric of claim 8, wherein said hydrophobic polymer or copolymer has repeating units derived from ethylene, propylene, butenes, hexenes, octenes, styrenes, 4-methylpentene-1 and combinations thereof.

10. The nonwoven fabric of claims 1 or 2, wherein said barrier web is rendered hydrophobic by coating with a hydrophobic coating.

11. The nonwoven fabric of claim 10, wherein said hydrophobic coating is a fluorocarbon coating material.

12. The nonwoven fabric of claims 1 or 2, wherein the barrier web has a maximum pore size between fibers of no more than about 23 micrometers.

13. The nonwoven fabric of claims 1 or 2, wherein the barrier web has a solids fraction of no less than about 0.03.

14. A nonwoven barrier fabric comprising a fibrous barrier web, said fabric having a hydrohead of at least about 145 cm and a Frazier permeability of at least about 0.3 m³/m²-min and having a relationship between barrier web basis weight, and fabric hydrohead and Frazier permeability described by the formula:

$$\mathrm{Bwt}(g/m^2) \leq \frac{4000 \cdot c \cdot (1 - 2.3 \cdot c) \cdot \rho_f}{\mathrm{Frazier} \cdot \mathrm{Hydrohead}^{k(c)}}, \qquad \text{wherein}$$

ρ_f, is the density of the barrier fibers, kg/m³c is the solids volume fraction of the barrier web,

$k(c) = 3.58 \cdot c^2 - 1.32 \cdot c + 1.77$,

Frazier is in units of m³/m²-min, and

Hydrohead is in units of centimeters of water column.

15. A nonwoven fabric according to one of claims 1, 2 or 14, comprising a structure of FF/mSB, wherein FF is a barrier web.

16. A nonwoven fabric according to one of claims 1, 2 or 14, comprising a structure of FF/SB, wherein FF is a barrier web.

17. A nonwoven fabric according to one of claims 1, 2 or 14, comprising a structure of mSB/FF/mSB, wherein FF is a barrier web.

18. A nonwoven fabric according to one of claims 1, 2 or 14, comprising a structure of FF/MB/SB, wherein FF is a barrier web.

19. A nonwoven fabric according to one of claims 1, 2 or 14, comprising a structure of SB/MB/FF/MB/SB, wherein FF is a barrier web.

20. A nonwoven fabric according to one of claims 1, 2 or 14, comprising a structure of FF/MB/mSB, wherein FF is a barrier web.

21. A nonwoven fabric according to one of claims 1, 2 or 14, comprising a structure of mSB/MB/FF/MB/mSB, wherein FF is a barrier web.

22.   A nonwoven fabric according to one of claims 1, 2 or 14, comprising a structure of SB/MB/FF/SB, wherein FF is a barrier web.

23.   A nonwoven fabric of claims 1 or 2, wherein said support web comprises fibers having diameters less than about 20 times the barrier web fiber diameters.

24.   The nonwoven fabric of claim 23, wherein said support web fibers have diameters less than about 13 micrometers.